

Orpheus and Eurydice;

A N
O P E R A.

THE ARGUMENT.

ORPHEUS, the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope, a celebrated poet and musician of Thrace, was so great a master in his art, that rivers would stop their course, storms and tempests cease, the most savage animals become tame, and trees and rocks be mov'd, influenc'd by the power of his harmony. Rhodope, a queen of Thrace, enrag'd at the refusal of her offer'd love, by her magic art rais'd a serpent, which stung his bride Eurydice in the heel, of which she immediately died.

Orpheus, deeply affected with the loss of her, went down into Hell after her; where his musick so prevail'd over Pluto, that he consented to restore her; but under this restriction, that in conducting her back, he shou'd not look upon her, till they arriv'd at the regions of light. To this he submitted; but mov'd by the ardency of his passion, and the fear of her being lost in following him through the dreary mazes of that dark region, he look'd back, just as they were got to the very confines of Hell: The Fiends carry'd her back, and the gates were shut against him.

This second loss of her he so regretted, that for her sake he resolv'd never more to entertain affection for a woman. This resolution he not only kept himself, but persuaded his companions to follow his example; which so enrag'd the Thracian dames, that in their furious transports, when celebrating the festival of Bacchus, on the banks of the river Heber, they tore him to pieces, and scatter'd his limbs about the neighbouring fields. Rhodope thus robb'd of all possibility of ever enjoying him, in rage, and madness for his loss, stabb'd herself. He was afterwards turn'd into a swan, and his lyre plac'd among'd the stars.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Men.

ORPHEUS, Son of Apollo and Calliope.
PLUTO, God of Hell.
ASCALAX, Attendant on Pluto.
Three FURIES.
FIENDS attending Pluto.

Women.

EURYDICE, Wife to Orpheus.
RHODOPE, Queen of Thrace, practising
Art Magic.
First NYMPH.
Second NYMPH.

NYMPHS attending Eurydice. BACCHANTS.

INTERLUDE I.

SCENE, an Apartment.

[After the Overture, the curtain rises to show musick, and discovers Rhodope in a reclin'd posture. She rises, and comes forward.]

RHODOPE alone.

VAIN are these sounds, this seat of rest!
Still, still I burn!—Love fires my breast.
O Orpheus!—Ha!—am I a queen?
Ah, no! love rules my heart unseen.

Ah! what are sceptres, when they prove
Too weak to gain the man I love?
Yet all I'll try—Vain pride, adieu!

A I R.

Kind powers, assuage this killing smart;
Or give me death to ease my heart.

[Exit Rhodope]

SCENE, a rocky mountainous Place.

Enter Orpheus with his lyre.

Orph. Amidst these unfrequented rocks I rove.
From Rhodope, the queen's unhappy love.

A

• Yet these dreary wastes among
I tune my ever-constant song
To my Eurydice.
Eurydice!

Where dost thou loiter, charming maid?
Fly, ye moments, swifter move,
Bring me pleasure, bring me love;
Till my charmer cheers my fight,
Fancy feels the gloom of night.

Bring, &c.

Enter Rhodope.

Rho. See, Orpheus, see---O hapless fate!
This posture ill becomes my state.
But, oh, I love! Leave, leave these plains,
The rude abode of ruder swains.
Indulge the queen her plaintive moan,
Return her love, and share her throne.

Orpb. Thrones cannot tempt the soul
Whom solitude and vernal joys delight;
In soothing quiet, rural ease,
Orpheus strives to live in peace.

Rho. This soothing quiet, rural ease,
I know too well for whom they please;
'Tis here Eurydice retires,
To meet thy love with mutual fires:
'Tis for Eurydice alone
You scorn my love, you scorn my throne.

Orpb. Alas! no more.

Rho. Ha! am I scorn'd!
Think better, Orpheus, and be wise:
Delights and purple greatness woo thee.

Orpb. Tempt me no more to leave the plain:
Thy love, thy promis'd thrones, are vain. [Exit.

Rho. Alas, he's gone!
And pity dwells not in his savage breast.
But whither goes he? O my heart!
'Tis to Eurydice he goes.
But if the powers of hell can my resentment aid,
He shall in death alone possess her.

A I R.

*Avenging furies rise;
Haste from the nether skies,
Aid an injur'd lover's rage.
Sting my rival's soul with anguish,
Till, like me, she rave---and languish:
Torture her, my pains I'll swage.*

[A serpent appears, who receives Rhodope's
commands, and, those ended, glides off the
stage. [Exit Rhodope.

SCENE, a Grove, terminated with a Water-fall.

Enter Orpheus with his lyre.

Orpb. The grove is mute, the feather'd choir
Suspend their wonted song,
Till she arrives, whose beauties cheer
And brighten up the morn.
And see, the lovely maid appears.

Enter Eurydice, attended by Nymphs.

Eur. My Orpheus!

Orpb. My Eurydice. [They embrace.

Eur. Ye powers! What verdant scenes are here!

Orpb. All nature springs when you appear.

A I R.

Eur. What joys the happy pair await
In Hymen's rosy fetters bound:
When in the soft connubial state,
The lover in the husband's found!

Orph. 'Tis female sweetness gives us joy,
Thro' ev'ry varied scene of life:
And marriage raptures never cloy,
Indulgent from a virtuous wife.

D U E T T O.

*Thus ever renewing embraces,
A circle of pleasures we'll prove:
No time those endearments efface,
Which are founded on virtue and love.*

[They sit on a bank, while the Nymphs dance;
which ended, they come forward.

Orpb. No more. Now let us part, my fair,
Each to our rural care.

May blessings still thy steps pursue!

Eur. Orpheus, my faithful swain, adieu!

Exit Orpheus.

Your sports pursue, while, fleet as air,

[To the Nymphs.

I fly, my grotto to prepare.

Hither, again, should Orpheus speed,

O call me from the neighb'ring mead. [Exit.

[The Nymphs continue dancing.

Orpheus returns.

Orpb. Where is my sweet Eurydice?

Nym. Her grotto she prepares for thee,
And thy return impatient waits.

A Nymph enters affrighted.

Nym. O sight of woe!

Orpb. What pale affright sits on thy cheek
Why burst those tears?

'Tis for Eurydice, I fear.

Nym. She dies! she dies!

Orpb. What do I hear? Avert it, gods!

Nym. From out the mountain's bushy sides

A serpent, with indented glides,

Came forth---and pierc'd her tender heel.

But see, she comes, a look to steal,

A sigh from Orpheus, e'er she die.

Orpb. Oh! let me meet her fainting eye.

[Eurydice is led in by two Nymphs, the rest
grieve over her.

Orpb. O cruel gods! O fate unjust!

Eur. Waste not a falling tear on me;

O think, we part, my faithful swain,

To meet in happier climes again.

O Orpheus! lo, I die, I die!

But, ah! no pains in death I find

Like those of leaving you behind!

Orpb. Alas! thy blooming colour fades!

Thy eye grows dim!--Eurydice!

Eur. No more.

I die within thy arms---Now all is o'er--- [Dies.

Orpb. The musick of her tongue is fled;

Cold death has seiz'd on all her charms:

Orpheus shall snatch her from his arms!

No---rage is vain---It will not be.

O lost Eurydice!

[Eurydice is borne off by the Nymphs, Orpheus
mourning over her.

I N T E R L U D E II. S C E N E, Hall.

Enter Pluto, and Attendants.

Plut. What daring mortal, who yet draws
The breath of upper, vital air,
Presumes to trespass on our realms?
Am I the least of all the gods,
That I'm so little fear'd?

Some rash, advent'rous son of Jove,
Arm'd with the thunder of his fire,
Comes to invade my throne!
Bid all th' avenging powers of hell
Instant unite their potent bands;
Our empire is at stake.

A I R.

Give the alarm,
Let us arm,

And this insolent mortal repel:

Chor. Give the alarm, &c.

Plut. Nought shou'd save

The bold slave

Who thus rashly dares violate hell.

Chor. Give the alarm, &c.

[Soft musick at a distance.

Plut. What distant sounds steal thro' the night!

[Musick louder.

O soothing softness! vast delight!

But 'tis not now a time

To waste in soft deluding sounds,

When stern rebellion's at our gates.

Therefore to arms—to arms!

[An alarm.

Enter a Shade.

Shade. Pardon, great king, that I appear—

The very fiends their tasks forbear;

The vulture now Prometheus leaves,

Nor Sisyphus his burden heaves;

Union smiles upon his wheel,

And all thy realms the powerful influence feel.

Plut. I feel it too. Ha! whence that throng!

Shade. See, Orpheus comes, from Phæbus sprung,

And heir to his all-potent song:

Unhappy shades his sounds adore,

And dream of bliss unknown before.

Plut. Fiends, this presumptuous wretch oppose.

[Orpheus enters, as the Poets describe him,
with a lyre, and a crown of bays.

Orph. Monarch of night, whose awful sway

These incorporeal shapes obey,

Relenting hear.

By no presumptuous motives led,

On thy dreary confines tread:

I mourn a wife;—a virgin wife, whose charms

N'er yet had blest'd these longing arms:

By rigid death's remorseless doom

She's snatch'd away, in beauty's bloom.

By all those charms thy queen inspir'd,

When in sweet Enna's plains retir'd,

Attend a lover's prayer.

Plut. These strains unheeded power dispense,

Like rich perfumes, they charm the sense!

Orph. Among thy shades there roves this fair,

Unbodied, form of fleeting air.

A I R.

Orph. Oh! to my arms restore Eurydice!

Or, never, never more

Set Orpheus free:

But let him rove,

A form of air,

Thro' bowers of love,

To seek the fair.

Plut. O wond'rous power of sound, to move

Hell, and its king, to thoughts of love!

Orph. Oh! to my arms restore Eurydice!

Plut. Thou hast prevail'd,

Fly, Ascalax, to blissful bowers repair;
Reverse her doom, and bring the willing fair.

Again Eurydice is thine. [Exit Ascalax.

Orph. Thus let me grateful fall, and thank thy power.

Plut. Arise. Let torment be no more,

Let anguish cease, let hell be gay;

Orpheus has blest the coming day.

A I R.

Plut. Thy tuneful fire

Informs the lyre,

And each melodious sound is love.

These melting strains

Can charm bell's pains,

And rigorous fate itself remove.

[Exit Pluto.

A Dance of Furies.

[Ascalax enters with Eurydice veil'd. Orpheus
and Eurydice running to embrace, Ascalax
interposes.

Orph. My life!

Eur. My love!

Asc. Lovers, forbear.

Hell's dread commands with patience hear.

Pluto thy beauteous shade restores,

To follow thee to happier shores.

If, ere you pass the utmost bound

Of hell's extended shade, thou turn thy eyes

To steal one look, again she dies,

Again, from thy embraces, flies.

Orph. O hard decree!

Asc. To jealous Rhodope you ow'd

Her first disaster. Now beware;

The second crime will be your own.

[Exit.

Orph. The rigid mandate I embrace.

Follow, sweet shade, and quit this horrid place.

[Exit Orpheus, followed by Eurydice.

SCENE changes to another Part of Hell.

Orpheus passes over, followed by Eurydice.

SCENE changes to a Part of the confines of Hell.

Orpheus appears, and coming out, stops and listens.

Orph. My love!—Not answer! Oh, my fear!

Hell's gloomy shade

Has, sure, her erring feet betray'd.

Where art thou? My Eurydice, appear.

[Orpheus turns, sees Eurydice following him.

Fiends appear and convey her back again.

Orpheus striving to follow her, other fiends

oppose, and drive him out of hell.



INTERLUDE III.

SCENE, a Solitude.

Enter Orpheus.

Orph. Eurydice! The image of thy charms
Dwells here, and will for ever dwell.

[Sits down and plays on his lyre; and while he
is playing, the barren mountain changes by
degrees into a pleasant hill. Trees arise, and
form a bower over the head of Orpheus.

Enter Rhodope.

Rho. Orpheus, behold, once more a queen attends,
To share thy sorrow, tho' deny'd thy love.

Orpb. Ha! Rhodope!

Blas't not my eyes with thy detested presence.
In hell thy killing malice stands disclos'd;
Thro' thee, and by thy curs'd command,
The fatal wound was given to my Eurydice.

Rho. If yet thy heart's susceptible of pity,
Forgive a crime

Which love and only love inspir'd.

Orpb. Fell murders, never! and, for thy curs'd
fate,

All thy sex I'll hate.

Live, and love on; in torments live,

And wither with despair.

*Twill feast my soul; and pleas'd revenge

Shall triumph in thy pains.

[*Exit.*

Rho. Mistaken, foolish, idle wretch, farewell.

Too late, alas, the dread effects thou'lt feel,

And rue, in death, thy insolent disdain.

For soon the Bacchanalian train,

Whose rites thou didst prophane,

Will strike the blow——

T'avenge their injur'd god and me.

What sudden cold thrills thro' my veins!

What shiverings seize me!

Perhaps, even now the stroke is given.

[*Shouts are heard.*

Ah! Hark!——What hideous noise!

O love, prevent the doom.

[*Runs out.*

SCENE draws, and discovers Orpheus,
[*Several Bacchantes rejoicing in a triumphant
manner, bearing the lyre and chaplets.*
Orpheus.

Enter Rhodope.

Rho. Ha! Horror blast my eyes! The deed
done!

The lily of the world is dead,

And joy and hope to Rhodope are lost!

Then perish, wretch! For now to live

Is torment more than hell can give.

Seize me, ye furies!——Lo, I come.

Thus my own hand shall seal my doom.

[*Scabs her*

Apollo descends, and speaks the following words.

Apol. Dear offspring of the fairest muse, thy

Draws tears celestial from a father's eye.

But tears are vain: In fame eternal live;

Exalted in the skies, thy harp shall shine,

And blaze thy glories thro' succeeding times.

Thy mother too, and every sister muse,

Shall mourn thy fall, and consecrate thy name

A theme for songs to ages yet unborn.

The best reward a god can give,

Thou offspring of a god receive,

Thy praise o'er vulgar fame to soar:

The great and good can claim no more.

